

Hundred Percent Chance: A Memoir

Robert K. Brown

3/3 Press (Jan 9, 2019)

Softcover \$16.95 (285pp)

978-1-73315-900-5

Hundred Percent Chance is an inspiring, provocative memoir about dealing with cancer that maintains its sense of humor when the going gets rough.

Robert K. Brown's medical memoir *Hundred Percent Chance* is larger than life without trying to be, relating the year Brown had cancer.

Studying abroad in England in 1990, twenty-year-old Robert Brown ignored the unnerving symptoms he was experiencing, including severe bruises, fatigue, bleeding gums, and aches and pains. But then, blood in his urine sent him, panicking, to the campus clinic and then the hospital. He was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia and sent back home to the United States to a hospital in Seattle.

Brown's beer-drinking, pool-playing, distance-running days at college were put on hold as he underwent three rounds of chemotherapy that made him sicker than he felt before the diagnosis. He tried to power through treatment so he could get back to his regular life.

Medical terms, descriptions of hospital settings and day-to-day schedules there, and often gruesome symptoms are disclosed, but the conversational and often humorous tone makes these details absorbing. From the friendliness of Brown's favorite nurses to the routine of being poked and prodded with needles every day to the month-long breaks in between chemo sessions when he felt back to his normal self, this is a full picture of what Brown's in-patient cancer treatment was like.

While the content of the book is raw, brutal, and honest, it is Brown's lively, rebellious attitude—and understanding that he was lucky to go into remission so quickly and to receive such excellent care—that makes this book a triumph. Every awful moment is balanced by arresting, rambunctious prose, and the book's personality is magnetic. Descriptions of painful experiences are poignant, and both Brown's internal and external worlds are illustrated with earnestness.

Told in chronological order and evenly paced, the book flows from one event to the next. Every scene plays an important role, whether it's placing an experience in the context of the setting, further sharpening focus on a particular person's influence, or deepening emotional impact. Still, as Brown says, there are no "boundless epiphanies about the importance of embracing life" here, and no "bolt of lightning [where] your narrator is forever changed." There is only moving on and taking life one day at a time.

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AIMEE JODOIN (May 1, 2019)

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